



Strong job growth doesn't lead to decline in food stamp use

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—House Republicans unveiled a new spending plan this week to balance the budget in ten years. It includes trimming \$1 trillion dollars from entitlement programs, such as food stamps, and converting the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP to a fund states would oversee by 2021.

More than 46 million Americans receive food assistance and it has been that way for 40 straight months. That number is comparable to nearly the entire population of Spain.

Mike Tanner, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a think tank in Washington, D.C. – sees nothing on Capitol Hill to suggest real reform is coming anytime soon.

“These programs are becoming less safety nets and more a way of life,” said Tanner.

Economists see many signs pointing to a good economy – most notably strong job growth. But the number of people dependent on food stamps has not declined much since setting a record in 2011.

“This is primarily because we changed the rules during the recession to make it easier to qualify for many of the programs and we haven't reverted back to the old rules,” said Tanner.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington found the cost of the SNAP program declined in 2014, but the cost to taxpayers still tops \$76 billion dollars a year.

“Coming from an area where the rate of taxation is 28 percent in our city, so, it's hard to feel optimistic about a lot of things when you are being taxed so much,” said businessman Fred Constantini.

America's second-largest welfare program behind Medicaid is Food Stamps. Despite the talk and the new plans on Capitol Hill to cut entitlement programs, Mike Tanner sees nothing to suggest reform is coming anytime soon.